

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 234220

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S/S - MR. BRIDGES

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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NODIS
FOR CHARGE FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, LE, JO

SUBJECT: LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

1. YOU SHOULD SEEK MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO SHARE WITH HIM AS AN ORAL MESSAGE FROM ME THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS WE HAVE GAINED OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION IN LEBANON THROUGH THE RECENT VISITS TO CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY BY FSO'S HOUGHTON AND MACK. IN SO DOING, YOU SHOULD SEEK GOJ ASSESSMENT OF THE EVOLVING LEBANESE SITUATION IN LIGHT OF (A) THE EXPECTED ASSUMPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY BY SARKIS ON SEPT. 23, AND (B) THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT CONFERENCE ON LEBANON IN OCTOBER. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT WE WOULD PARTICULARLY WELCOME GOJ SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT BEST SUPPORT SARKIS IN MOVING TOWARD A SETTLEMENT.

FOLLOWING AODS THE HOUGHTON/MACK VISIT, YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 234220

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IS GENERALLY CONFIDENT, AND SHOWED LITTLE CONCERN ABOUT THEIR CAPACITIES TO DEFEND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THEIR OVERWHELMING PREOCCUPATION, HOWEVER, IS THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIANS RESIDING IN LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS REMAIN UNWILLING TO RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE AS REGARDS THE PALESTINIAN ROLE IN THE LEBANESE STATE; THEY ARE OPPOSED TO LEAVING THE PALESTINIANS IN A POSITION TO RETAIN THE STATE-WITHIN-A-STATE STATUS OF THE PRE-WAR PERIOD OR TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN INTERNAL LEBANESE POLITICAL PROCESSES.

-- SOME, SUCH AS CHAMOUN, WANT SOMETHING MUCH MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN THE CAIRO ACCORDS; CHAMOUN HIMSELF TALKS ABOUT SENDING OUT OF LEBANON ALL PALESTINIANS WHO CAME TO LEBANON AFTER 1969. SARKIS IS NOT NEARLY AS RIGID, BUT HE ALSO MENTIONED THE NEED FOR A TRANSITIONAL SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN LEBANON, WHILE WAITING FOR THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION WHICH WOULD BE REACHED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

-- THE CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT MADE CLEAR HOW THEY INTEND TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE PHALANGE AND SARKIS SEEM TO BE THE LEADING PROPONENTS OF AN EARLY CEASEFIRE WHICH WOULD ENABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT EFFORTS TO BE CONDUCTED IN A MORE PROPITIOUS ATMOSPHERE. THE PHALANGE IN PARTICULAR TELLS US IT INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO PROBE THE PALESTINIANS FOR AT LEAST A LIMITED UNDERSTANDING. EVEN FOR THE PHALANGE, HOWEVER, PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE METN SEEMS TO BE AN IRREDUCIBLE MINIMAL CONCESSION. EVEN THE CHRISTIANS WHO WANT A CEASEFIRE NOW ARE CONCERNED THAT THE EXTREMISTS AMONG THE PALESTINIANS WILL ULTIMATELY REJECT ANY UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPED WITH THE CHRISTIANS.

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS GENERALLY FAVOR A RESOLUTION OF THE LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN ASPECT OF THE CONFLICT PRIOR TO A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. THEY APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT THE PURELY LEBANESE ASPECTS OF THE CONFLICT ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION. HERE AGAIN, SARKIS AND TO SOME EXTENT GEMAYEL ARE PREPARED TO OFFER MORE FAR-REACHING POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 234220

REFORMS OR CONCESSIONS THAN CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE.

-- THE CHRISTIANS ARE GRATEFUL FOR SYRIAN HELP. SARKIS SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO WORK WITH THE SYRIANS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. SARKIS EXPLICITLY ASKED THAT THE U.S. DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO HELP ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A CENTRAL AUTHORITY ON SEPTEMBER 23. WE PRESUME HE MEANT BY THIS A CEASEFIRE OR A SITUATION THAT WOULD PERMIT

THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS TO ACCEPT HIM AS THE PIVOT AROUND WHICH THE COUNTRY COULD BE REUNITED.

-- NONE OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS APPEARS TO ADVOCATE PARTITION. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SUPPORT FOR SOME FORM OF

CANTONIZATION WHICH WOULD ACCEPT THE EXISTING DE FACTO GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION INsofar AS IT RELATED TO THE DISPOSITION OF MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES ALONG CONFESSIONAL LINES. EVEN THOSE LEADERS COMPLETELY DEDICATED TO THE CONCEPT OF A REUNIFIED LEBANON EXPECT THERE WILL BE A SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY IN AT LEAST THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE.

-- IT IS AN ACCEPTED FACT AMONG ALL THAT SARKIS WILL TAKE OVER AS PRESIDENT ON SEPTEMBER 23.

-- THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS GENERALLY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUPPORT IN MATERIAL AND MEN BEING SUPPLIED FROM ABROAD, FROM THE SOVIETS, IRAQ AND LIBYA.

-- SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ASKED FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, AND WE EXPLAINED OUR POSITION THAT WE WILL CONTINUE OUR POLICY OF NOT SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO EITHER SIDE, NOR PERMITTING COMMERCIAL SALES, BUT THAT THE U.S. WILL BE PREPARED TO PLAY ITS PART IN HELPING EQUIP A NATIONAL FORCE AFTER THE CONFLICT IS CONCLUDED.

-- OUR ENVOYS MADE CLEAR THAT WE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT A SOLUTION THAT WOULD PRESERVE THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE, NATIONAL UNITY AND COHESION OF LEBANON. WE SAID THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE JANUARY-
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 234220

FEBRUARY PRINCIPLES AND WITH A RESTRICTED ROLE FOR THE PALESTINIANS, WE SAID WE HAD CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION, AND WE WOULD BE WILLING TO BACK MOVES IN LEBANON TO BRING THE FIGHTING TO AN END AND NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT.

-- WE TOLD THE CHRISTIANS THAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEND BACK FROM TIME TO TIME REPRESENTATIVES TO TALK TO THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS SECURITY CONDITIONS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR EMBASSY IN WEST BEIRUT TO RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL CONTACTS. WE TOLD SARKIS THAT WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE IN WASHINGTON A PERSONAL ENVOY FROM HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER HIS INAUGURATION.

3. AFTER GOING OVER THE FOREGOING POINTS, YOU SHOULD SAY

THAT WE WOULD WELCOME HIS MAJESTY'S ASSESSMENT OF THE
EVOLVING SITUATION. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT WE ARE
PREPARED TO BACK UP SARKIS WITH ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES,
INCLUDING HELP FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON ECONOMICALLY,

AFTER HE ASSUMES OFFICE AND HOPE HE WILL BE A FORCE FOR
UNITY AND POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION. FINALLY, PLEASE
CONVEY TO HIS MAJESTY MY WARM PERSONAL REGARDS. ROBINSON

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